



Koch Brothers Launch Big-money Campaign Against Trump Tariffs

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The Koch brothers, head of the enormous multinational corporation founded by their father 75 years ago, launched a two-pronged attack against President Trump's tariff policies on Wednesday: a six-figure television ad now running in the Washington, D.C. market coupled with a letter to every member of Congress demanding they rescind powers they gave to the executive branch concerning regulation of commerce with foreign nations.

The announcement of the brothers' multi-million dollar campaign in early June seemed innocuous enough, with James Davis, executive vice president of Freedom Partners (part of the Koch network) stating:

The campaign makes a clear statement: trade is a major priority for our network. We will work aggressively to educate policymakers and others about the facts.

Trade lifts people out of poverty and improves lives. It is critical to America's future prosperity and our consumers, workers and companies.

Tariffs and other trade barriers make us poorer. They raise prices for those who can least afford it.

All of which is true, except for that bit about "the facts." Missing from Davis' statement are two essential facts: Koch Industries does half of its business outside the United States, employing people in more than 60 countries worldwide. So it is in Koch's self-interest to promote "free trade" (actually, trade managed by international, unelected tribunals) as tariffs do raise costs to its various companies involved in oil, chemicals, minerals, paper, and other industries. More importantly, however, is that the newly launched campaign reflects the basic underlying principles of the Koch empire: internationalism, globalism, and multi-lateral agreements that bind citizens down through restrictions, rules, regulations, and laws imposed from the top down.

For many, this seems contradictory and counterintuitive, especially as the Koch brothers, through their network including Freedom Partners, Americans for Prosperity, and the Libre Initiative, have poured millions into fighting government overregulation and expanding an understanding of the freedom philosophy through various conservative think tanks such as the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation. That's why it's worthwhile to review the principles under which the Koch network is operating. The full text of those principles, entitled "American Trade: Driven by Freedom," can be found here.

The Koch network's principles begin reasonably enough, noting that "trade is mutually beneficial to all trading partners ... [that] trade allows businesses and individuals to make the most of their comparative advantages ... [that] trade has helped lift millions of Americans out of poverty ... [and that] tariffs and other protectionist policies supported by tariffs represent a tax on consumers and businesses."

It's when those principles devolve into action that the network's real ideology is revealed:

The president should reduce or eliminate trade barriers through international agreements, including:

Modernizing NAFTA....

Resuming negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the European Union; and

Returning to the negotiating table on the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The statement briefly reverts back to the blessings of a free market: "Individuals and businesses in a competitive market, not government bureaucrats or politicians, should guide trade decisions." But it then pivots back to exactly the sort of agreements created, interpreted, and enforced by bureaucrats and politicians, only on an international level: "Policymakers should support expanding existing agreements and seeking new agreements with trading partners that include processes for resolving trade disagreements."

This is the siren song that drew sovereign nations into the European Union: It was all about free markets and reducing tariffs and cooperation, only for them to discover, too late, that it was a lie leading to the political union that now abrogates national sovereignty. This explains why The John Birch Society has long opposed such international "free trade" agreements, seeing them as Trojan Horses working to eliminate national sovereignty in preparation for the imposition of a global New World Order. That the Koch network now sides with the globalists is difficult to comprehend, but there it is.

As mentioned above, the Koch wants Congress to rescind the power it granted to the executive branch to make tariff agreements without congressional assent: "Congress should revisit existing trade authorities granted to the executive branch."

The network reiterated that point in a letter sent on Wednesday to every member of Congress, saying essentially the same thing: Rein in the president and take back the power under the Constitution to regulate commerce among the nations. From that letter, [also available here](#): "Congress must revisit its delegation of tariff authorities to the executive branch. This legislation [S.177/H.R. 5281] would restore to Congress some of the authority granted to it under Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution that, 'Congress shall have Power ... To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations.'"

One wonders where the Koch network was when Congress granted that power to the executive branch in the first place. Why the sudden interest in constitutional limitations and the separation of powers being breached by the Congress?

The multimillion-dollar Koch campaign, which will include advertisements, lobbying, and grassroots mobilization to pressure Congress, will extend at least through 2020, and thus Trump's reelection campaign.